Survey Research

- Definition
  - Determines and describes the way things are
- Importance of
  - Frequently used in research studies
  - Used to influence opinion
  - Useful for investigating a variety of educational problems

Differences from Qualitative Research

- Survey Research
  - Plan is more structured and standardized
  - Studies topic from researcher perspective
- Qualitative Research
  - Studies topic from participant perspective
  - Smaller sample size

Method

- Identify problem
- Review literature
- Select participants and instruments
- Collect data
- Analyze data
- Report conclusions
Common Errors in Survey Studies

- **Lack of participant response**
  - Be skeptical about surveys that report low response rates in their results (below 60% of the sample)
  - Can be caused by poor follow-up procedures
  - Methods section should outline what was done to encourage participation
- **Unclear/ambiguous survey items**
  - Simple questions are best
  - Avoid jargon
  - Confusing questions may undermine response rate

Types of Surveys

- **Public opinion polls**
  - Are you for or against state proficiency testing?
- **Developmental surveys**
  - What kind of books do 5th, 6th, & 7th graders prefer?
- **Follow-up studies**
  - Examine the effectiveness of a program or changes in a population over time.
  - Are UNLV graduates able to get good jobs with their degrees?

Classifications of Survey Research

- **Classified by how data are collected**
  - Self-report
  - Observation
- **Classified by how often a group is surveyed**
  - Cross-sectional (a single shot in time)
  - Longitudinal (multiple shots to examine change over time)
    - Trend
    - Cohort
      - A different sample of 2004 COE graduates surveyed each year to monitor changes in attitudes toward schooling over time within the 2004 graduating class
    - Panel
      - A single sample of 2004 COE graduates (the panel) is surveyed repeatedly to measure changes in their attitude toward schooling over time
    - Follow-up
      - A sample of prior COE survey participants is surveyed years after the initial survey to monitor changes in attitude toward schooling
Survey Data Collection Methods

- Questionnaire (mail & e-mail)
- Interview (face to face)
- Observation
- Telephone

Consult table 10.1 for each method’s advantages & disadvantages

Questionnaire Items

- Scaled items
  - Likert (can have an even or odd number of choices)
    - I love reading about research methods: SA A U D SD
  - Semantic differential (involves use of anchor points)
    - Rate your enthusiasm about research methods using a 7-point scale in which 1=I hate this stuff & 7=This is my true calling

- Ranked items
- Checklist items
- Free response items (open ended questions)

Qualities of Good Items

- Address single concept
  - Don’t ask, “Although labor unions are desirable in most fields, they have no place in education, agree or disagree?”
  - Instead ask two questions
    - Do believe that labor unions are desirable in most fields?
    - Do you believe that labor unions have a place in education?

- Avoid jargon
  - What is MFE, CBA, COEAS, MDT, LRE, etc.?

- Include point of reference
  - How much time do you spend per day preparing for class?
  - Avoid nonspecific terms, such as “usually” or “several” that the respondent will define for themselves
Qualities of Good Items

- Avoid leading questions
  - Would you agree with most reasonable people that...
- Avoid sensitive questions (those where you can predict the answer)
  - Bad professors won’t admit it if asked
- Do not assume facts not necessarily true
  - Have you stopped using Direct Instruction to teach reading?
- Pretest items (pilot test)
  - Find out if the questions are clear to members of your target population
  - Changes can be made to clarify confusing items

Questionnaire Design

- Do not crowd items (have plenty of white space)
- Number pages and items
- Do not put important questions at end

Characteristics of Cover Letters

- Is brief, neat, personalized
- Gives reason to respond
- Gives means to respond
- Includes endorsement, if possible
  - UNLV, CCSD, etc.
- Promises anonymity or confidentiality
  - (know the difference)
- States deadline for response
- Includes stamped, self-addressed envelope
- "Bribes" can also be helpful
Follow-Up Activities
- Reminder postcard
- Second survey
- Telephone
- Explain non-response in reporting of results

Analysis of Results
- Give percentage of responders for each alternative for each item
- Report by subgroups
- Report sums or means
- Report by item clusters

Interview Studies
- Advantages
  - More in-depth
  - Flexible
  - Gives opportunity to establish rapport
  - Allows immediate follow-up
- Disadvantages
  - May be biased by interviewer
  - Time-consuming and expensive
  - Requires skill
Conducting Interview Research

- Construct an interview guide
- Pretest the interview procedure
- Administer the interview
- Record responses

Observation Research

- Non-participant observation
  - Naturalistic
  - Simulation

Meta-Analysis

- Purpose
  - To summarize the results of many studies that have examined the same problem
  - Ex) The efficacy of social skills training
- Effect size
  - An index describing how much better or worse the experimental group did than the control group in a study
  - Converts findings from several studies into “data points” that can be used to compute an “average effect size” for all of the studies examined
  - An average effect size of 0.00 means that the treatment in question was not effective
  - An average effect size around 1.00 suggests that the treatment was generally found to be effective